



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

***PLEASE NOTE, THE VIRGINIA SALTWATER REVIEW WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 26 OR OCTOBER 3, BUT WILL RETURN ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10.***

## **OVERVIEW**

IT'S TIME FOR THE STATE FAIR OF VIRGINIA, and that means the Saltwater Review will go on hiatus for the next two weeks as our dedicated staff will be working daily with a multitude of school groups at the State Fair of Virginia. Be sure and stop by the VMRC exhibit in the Technology Building, and find out more about current and upcoming recreational fishing projects, as well as see our Chesapeake Bay critter tanks and law enforcement displays. For more information about the State Fair of Virginia on the web, go to: <http://www.statefair.com/home>.

However, once we return to publication October 10, we will continue producing the Saltwater Review, twice monthly (not weekly) until mid-December, so that we can highlight the upcoming fall striped bass season and the annual red drum blitz.

This week, northeast winds have kept many anglers home waiting for better weather. Those that were able to go out in the murky waters found yellow belly spot, a few cobia, speckled trout, and red drum. Remember, we still need specific catch-and-release information on red drum, especially the larger adults (go to [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com) to report your catches).



Please remember the VMRC's Marine Sportfish Collection Project! Anyone donating fish needs to be sure to fill out the donation forms completely, being sure to provide an accurate (and legible) address and contact number, making notation of where you caught the fish and a whole weight from a certified scale (optional, but if available it would be very beneficial to the project). Also, don't forget to mark a shirt size or a hat for your reward, otherwise you will only receive an XL shirt, no exchanges. Forms must be filled out completely for rewards. A reminder to all tautog anglers: we are in need of more donations of tautog this year to help make up for the extended closure (and lack of

available samples) from the commercial fishery.

One more reminder: The 2008 recreational striped bass fishery for the Chesapeake Bay Fall season will reopen October 4, 2008. The minimum size limit will be 18 inches and the maximum size limit will be 28 inches, with a possession limit of 2 striped bass per person. Also, recreational anglers may possess one fish of the two fish possession limit that is 34 inches or greater in length. The Marine Resources Commission has scheduled a public hearing in late October to decide whether there should be any changes to the December 10 through 31 recreational striped bass fishing regulations. Currently, a possession limit of one striped bass is scheduled to be in effect, from December 10 through 31, and that fish shall not be a size that is between 28 and 34 inches total length, as in 2007.



**Red drum catch-and-release data is still needed!** VMRC is collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches). You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal ([www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)).

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

According to Donna at Captain Bob's, flounder have started biting again. Several keepers were caught in the Chincoteague Channel between markers 23 and 25. The bridges were hot with striped bass at night (probably because of the full moon). A red drum was reportedly caught off of Assateague Island in the surf, and a 6-pound flounder was caught there last week, as well. Several striped bass have been reported from under the drawbridge as well. Snapper bluefish were around, and a few kingfish were landed from in the ocean. Northeast winds will probably keep most anglers home during the weekend. Captain Bob's will switch to its fall hours this week.

### **Wachapreague**

According to staff at the Wachapreague Marina, numerous dolphin were found at the Norfolk Canyon along with a whopping 272-pound blue marlin. The dolphin ranged from 5 to 20 pounds. Most offshore fishing has been better past 40 fathoms. Inshore, staff reports that flounder fishing is fair.

At Captain Zed's, anglers continued to catch flounder and croaker near Paramour and Cedar islands, which were hot spots for the season. A few spot and grey trout were landed, and there were reports of small red drum sightings. Offshore action in the canyons has been productive with dolphin and wahoo, and wreck fishing was doing really well with black sea bass.

### **Cape Charles**

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, anglers reported catches of red drum in the surf on the seaside of the Eastern Shore.

These anglers were using peelers for bait. Croaker fishing has been slow, but some were found last week around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A few spot were landed near Kiptopeke. Speckled trout fishing is doing really well with several citation fish brought in from Hungar's Creek and Plantation Creek. Citation flounder were caught near Kiptopeke and at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

### **Onancock**

Captain Wil reports slow fishing this week in Onancock. With local water temperature staying warm, he reported a mix of fish. Croaker were scattered with some large ones mixed in with the crowds of small ones. Large flounder were hard to find, but there were a lot of small flounder showing. Captain Wil is hoping for normal September fish to pick up soon.

### **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

At Cobb's Marina, high winds and poor weather have kept boats from going out this week. No citations were reported.

According to staff at Sunset Boating Center, keeper flounder were found at the Hampton Bar this week. Overall flounder fishing has been productive this week, and catches of spot have been reported as well.

At Salt Pond's Marina, staff reported flounder—two were brought in at 21 and 22 inches in length.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Offshore fishing is very good. Billfish action remains hot with good numbers of white marlin being caught, and some sailfish and blue marlin are in the mix. Dolphin were everywhere. Yellowfin tuna and wahoo are becoming a more common catch, and getting a bigeye bite is a possibility. Offshore bottom fishing, as always, is good. Large sea bass and blueline tilefish are on the 50-fathom curve. Grouper, golden tilefish, and other critters are being caught along the walls of the Norfolk Canyon. There is yet another pending All-Tackle World Record from Virginia's offshore bountiful bottom. Dan Dutton, while fishing on the Healthy Grin, captured a spotted hake which, if approved, will establish the initial record for this species. Dan's monster, a 3.57-pound 21-inch fish, is much larger than the reported 16-inch maximum length for this species. Amberjack and jack crevalle are available at the Chesapeake Light Tower. The Gulf Hustler, Ricks, Hanks, and Triangle wrecks are other good spots to try for jacks.

King mackerel fishermen have been disappointed recently, but don't give up on the kings yet. October is a great month to catch kings in Virginia so this fishery is going to heat back up. Anglers trying for kings along Sandbridge have been encountering plenty of sharks. They have also caught some nice cobia and some big red drum. The Sandbridge Fishing Pier will be full of anglers looking for the fall bull red drum run. There are some there now. Cobia continue to be caught by sight-casting, and some are still being caught by anglers chumming. These fish should be leaving soon, but for now, they are putting on a good show. Big flounder are being caught along the channel edges in the lower bay, along the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Cape Henry Wreck and around the coastal wrecks. The Brass Spike is a good flounder spot this time of year. The spot run is on. Not many over a pound, but a lot of eatin'-size fish. There has been a good run in Rudee Inlet. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are everywhere, and the speckled trout bite is getting better each week.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Wind, wind, and more wind is keeping most anglers inshore. The fishing action will wane a bit until after the blow, but not all action comes to a halt with turbulent and dirty water. The red drum species thrives in this environment, and, with that said, the long awaited big red drum run off the Little Island fishing pier is here. True to form, this run usually kicks off with the first stiff North Easterly blow in September. Pier anglers are hoisting up bull reds from the end of the pier, with the best action still to come. Red drum are also providing action off the Hungar's Creek and Cape Charles areas.

Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are on the loose within the shallows, inlets, and creeks, as well as the surf off Sandbridge and the Eastern Shore Barrier islands. Anywhere within Lynnhaven River is a great place for pups right now. Long Bay Pointe Bait and Tackle reports that juvenile reds of all sizes are hitting most lures, live bait, and cut bait.

Fall speckled trout catches are inching up the charts with good numbers of fish in Hungar's Creek and Rudee and Lynnhaven inlets.

Decent spot are pouring into the lower bay area, with catches scattered in all the usual haunts. The local piers are excellent places to get in on the spot action. Look for the biggest spot on the Hampton Bar, off the Little Creek Jetties, and all the lower bay inlets. Horse croaker in the 2-pound range are lurking in deeper areas around the lower bay channels, inlets, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, preparing for their southern migration.

Big cobia are lingering on buoys along the ocean front and near the mouth of the bay, with fish in excess of 50 pounds falling to jigs and live bait. King mackerel have been scarce recently with the dirty water, but this action should improve into October. Spanish mackerel are still an excellent choice along Sandbridge and Dam Neck in about 25 feet of water. Schools of false albacore have been spotted close to the beach, which can prove very sporting on light tackle. A hook-up with a large shark is also a possibility in these same areas.

The Flounder action took a break this week, but will heat back up as anglers find cleaner water. With the wind coming from the north east this week, anglers can drift the protected bayside Eastern Shore area with little exertion. Chris at Chris' Bait and Tackle reports that folks are finding some keepers, with some fish pushing 8.5 pounds drifting off the Kiptopeke area. Once boats can get out, the offshore wreck flatfish action is a good alternative for an easy catch with strip baits bounced over the structure. Expect nice sea bass as a by-catch, along with a few triggerfish. Amberjack are still available on local wrecks and will remain on the southern towers through October.

Schoolie striped bass are hitting offerings all over the lower bay and will only become more active as the water temperature drops.

The unpredictable weather is keeping many blue water anglers closer to shore, but improving tuna action is waiting once they can negotiate a decent day. A few larger class yellowfin are available near the Norfolk Canyon. Wahoo will continue to slam spreads for several more weeks, while bailer and gaffer dolphin are still a good backup. The marlin bite is still on when boats can reach them.

## **Virginia Middle Bay**

Roger, with Jett's Hardware, reports that the Spanish mackerel fishing has been consistent, and there are nice bluefish patrolling around as well, weighing up to 7 pounds. People have been finding grey trout in deeper water using small jigs such as Spec Rigs, and it's not a bad idea to tip the hook with a little meat such as squid or shrimp. Large spot are also being caught, although they haven't reached the much sought after yellowbelly classification yet.

Dan, at Smith Point Marina, reports that bluefish are schooling up and can be caught readily on trolled metal spoons. Spanish mackerel were also available using the same technique. There were still a few flounder around the jetties of the Potomac River, but Dan doesn't expect them to be around much longer as the water temperatures cool off. Striped bass were also available, but not many people are fishing for them yet as the season doesn't kick in until October 4<sup>th</sup>.

Garrett's Marina reports that there were spot and grey trout working their area as well. Speckled trout were around, but due to the tightlipped speckled trout fishermen, it is hard to know any more details.

Captain Jim Thompson reports that the past two weeks have been a little slow, but the fish have been huge. The spot were number ones or jumbos, but you had to wait and be patient to have a nice catch. Most of larger fish were at Whitestone, but that is changing as they move toward the mouth of the Rappahannock. There are plenty of fish, but they are very picky when they bite. The Spike was also a good place for large spot, and spot and trout were reported at Butlers Hole. In the Piankatank, the best areas were Cherry Point and the Number 5 marker. The bluefish were still everywhere, and a jig with cut bait is awesome if you get slow fishing for spot, croaker, and mullet. According to Captain Jim, always try deeper water in the afternoon, because it is where the fish go for comfort in the warm weather we are having.

## **Virginia Beach**

Staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports slow inshore fishing due to weather this week. Shark were landed, along with cobia and red drum at Sandbridge. Yellow belly spot were found in the inlet along with a few flounder and scattered taylor bluefish. Offshore, a lot of white marlin and dolphin were caught with some blue marlin mixed in. The Norfolk Canyon and the Cigar area were hotspots.

## **Virginia Piers**

At the Ocean View Pier, large spot were biting well all week. Trout and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) rounded out the catches.

At the Lynnhaven Pier, huge croaker were biting along with numerous large spot. Nice-sized puppy drum were brought in, and bluefish and speckled trout were reported.

At the Virginia Beach Pier, numerous spot were landed along with a mixed bag of croaker, sea mullet, spadefish, sheepshead, pompano, and puppy drum.

Like many local piers, the Sandbridge Pier saw numerous spot last week. Mixed in were puppy drum, a few

bluefish, and red drum.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Weather conditions early in the week were conducive to angling, and the fish cooperated. However, weather later in the week deteriorated with strong northeast winds and made it a little more difficult to find fish. Hopefully, when the weather improves, the fishing will still be good. Water temperatures remained in the upper 70s in the surf, but should be dropping soon as cool nights are forecasted for next week.

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head showed a lot of promise early in the week with the dolphin bite going strong. Mixed in with the dolphin were yellowfin and blackfin tuna. Wahoo, barracuda, king mackerel, and barracuda were available for people trolling and blueline tilefish, snapper, triggerfish, and sea bass for the bottom droppers. The billfish bite has dropped off with the northeast winds. Inshore fishing was producing good catches of bluefish and Spanish mackerel. On the piers and in the surf, fishing was hot and cold with bluefish and Spanish mackerel working in schools. In the sound and inlet, fishing slowed with large speckled trout early in the mornings and a few sheepshead and triggerfish around structures.

South of Oregon Inlet, the Spanish mackerel and bluefish bite was fast and furious, and the puppy drum were running so well that people were catching them on lures. The bite slowed down later in the week as the wind picked up, but a few sea mullet found the dirtier water to their liking. People who fled the beach and fished in the sound were rewarded with speckled trout, puppy drum, and a few croaker.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras also produced numerous dolphin with a few tuna and wahoo thrown in for good measure. Anglers fishing inshore and in the sound found large Spanish mackerel with a good number of small red drum and bluefish.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

# Virginia's Artificial Reef Program

Virginia's Artificial Reef Program enhances recreational fishing opportunities through the construction of artificial fishing reefs. Twenty sites have been established; fifteen in Chesapeake Bay and five in the Atlantic. A variety of "materials of opportunity", such as steel vessel hulls and demolition concrete have been used as well as specifically designed habitat structures. Most of the sites are marked with yellow "special purpose" buoys, established and maintained by the Artificial Reef Program.

## Reef Material

Artificial reefs have been created of almost every material imaginable. Over the years, much has been learned about the importance of material selection in constructing a successful reef. There are two general classes of materials that are used to develop artificial reefs: materials of opportunity and fabricated materials.

### Concrete Pipe



Materials of opportunity are materials that have outlived their original purpose, are environmentally safe, are of suitable size and shape for the target site, can be transported to a permitted site, and are both durable and stable. Materials of opportunity take many forms and should not lead to the misconception of reef programs as elaborate forms of ocean dumping.

"Reef Exercise" (REEFEX), a joint Department of Defense-civilian cooperative pilot program, provided obsolete main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, Sheridan tanks, and other military battle hardware for ten state artificial reef programs from New York to Louisiana. Between 1994 and 2003, 8 Armored Personnel Carriers and 18 Sheridan tanks were stripped, cleaned and deployed on

some of Virginia's offshore reef sites.

### Reef Ball™



Concrete, either in fabricated units specifically designed for artificial reefs or imperfect concrete manufactured products, such as culvert or rubble from razed buildings, sidewalks, roadways and bridges, has a demonstrated high success rate as artificial reef material in both marine and estuarine environments. The obvious reason for this high rate of success is the strong compatibility of the material with the environment in which it is placed, and for the purpose for which it is placed. Concrete is generally very durable and stable in reef applications.

Over the last 30 years, various fabricated concrete structures, such as reef balls™, tetrahedrons, igloos, and Tires-in-Concrete(TICs) have been developed and deployed to suite the needs of the reef environment being created.



## The Virginia Artificial Reef guys...



Mike Meier



Joe Kalista

For more information on Virginia's Artificial Reef Program, contact Mike Meier at (757) 247-2263 or by e-mail at [mike.meier@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:mike.meier@mrc.virginia.gov)



# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.


You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
Recreational Fishing Online Reporting





**Recreational Saltwater Fishing**

Welcome Jgrist,

**Red Drum Reports are Needed!**

We are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches).

**New 2008 Tautog Regs**

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

**June 16, 2008**

Members: 1,457  
Trips: 295  
Catches: 3,941

**Related Links**



# ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!












## THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,*

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

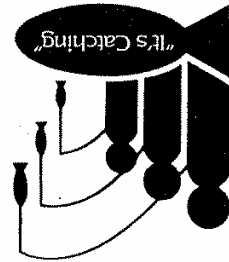
**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton) Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**  
**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach) Wachapreague Marina**  
**Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**